



Confederazione Mondiale Mornese Exallieve ed Exallievi delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice

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## THE STYLE OF OUR LEADERSHIP-MANAGEMENT DIMENSION

My thoughts on the leadership style in the management dimension are the result of reflections that arise from both my experience gained in my professional activities in the third sector with associations and social cooperatives and from that acquired within our association in various fields and levels. All of this is in parallel with a reexamination of my life experiences, starting from my direct experience since my youth with the FMA (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians). It is a work I have accepted to present with the perspective of sharing experiences.

The assigned topic concerns our leadership style as the Past Pupil of the FMA in the management dimension.

## APPROACH TO THE TOPIC

In general terms, the management dimension of an organization encompasses a set of processes and systems aimed at achieving its primary purposes. This ensures the organization's existence in the long term and the distribution of social value produced among various stakeholders. This area holds delicate and particular importance because, in addition to ethical, social, and solidarity motivations, it requires, among other things, knowing how to do something, implementing exemplary practices, having adequate skills, ensuring proper preparation, **learning how to write and plan a project; managing economic resources;** organizing the management of employees and volunteers; **knowing how to communicate,** effectively coordinate group work.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion about our leadership, applied to the management dimension, must be approached with great attention to complexity in internal relationships/interrelationships and external relations<sup>2</sup>. Just think about internal connections, the aspect related to authority, the structural and functional sources of legitimacy, the application of role-playing within groups (*leadership and membership*)<sup>3</sup>, the level of motivation, and possible conflicts and in external relations, think about the speed of change, ongoing transformations, demands, and the nature of needs, to mention significant areas. These elements can render the best organizational model ineffective if not adequately understood, shared, and evaluated.

Hence, there is a need to reflect on our *leadership*<sup>1</sup> style, or rather, in my opinion, on the spirit that should inspire those who take on the responsibility and commitment to lead a group or an association in the case of a formally structured group at various levels. To introduce ourselves to the topic, we can understand leadership as an art and a heart in the dual Anglo-Saxon sense of "art" and "heart."

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<sup>1</sup> AA.VV. – *Lavorare nel terzo settore* Ed. Carocci Faber

<sup>2</sup> Cfr Slide su complessità

<sup>3</sup> Cfr *Oltre il potere – Discorso sulla leadership* Giancarlo Trentini Ed. Franco Angeli



## 2. INTRODUCTION MOMENT: REEXAMINING OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE

The concept of leadership in its double Anglo-Saxon sense leads to a style not constructed with rules and formulas from a manual but as an expression of a lived experience that we all have in our hearts, capable of engaging with the foundational texts, which can be found both in institutional texts and in the specific spiritual writings of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. It's a style of *leadership* that is conscious and robust, capable of "resilience" in difficulties and critical thinking.

From this perspective, for us, Past Pupils of the FMA (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians), the preface to the first edition of Mother Mazzarello's letters (1975), written by Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone and considered one of the best syntheses of the spirituality of the Saint, is illuminating. He writes: "Never as in this case will the word 'spirituality' have been inadequate to express this throbbing life that does not care for formulas but touches the heart with every word." A life rich in vigorous and fresh faith, where merit is inseparably the result of our freedom and God's grace, a belief that operates in humility and joy. "... all the balance is so perfect and pure that any effort for even a well-done elaboration would be out of place here. **We are simply in the truth.** These letters make us understand what kind of **temperament spiritual motherhood** is when God inspires it. **It does not discuss. It does not reason. It lives and communicates life.**"<sup>4</sup>

In short, **an authentic life**, where life is communicated, there is truth and fullness of meaning.

The style permeated by this spirit is expressed spontaneously and naturally. Our spirituality has this dynamism and vitality that we must convey in our actions and relationships. There are steps to be reexamined so that simple, spontaneous impulses do not drive them but are in line with the Salesian charisma that we, as laypeople, have embraced. In this regard, the theme of identity and belonging, constitutive of our way of being together, cannot be ignored. They are the hallmark of our relationships. Sister Leslie Sandigo writes, "You must keep a strong sense of belonging so that it does not become a mere 'being together' of members who only meet for occasional reasons. Identity without belonging leads to individualistic complacency. Belonging without identity can become inauthentic. In either case, you feel it does not fill the heart with joy or lead to change."<sup>5</sup>

### *THE THREE PILLARS OF LEADERSHIP*

Before examining specific concrete moments of management, I briefly focus on the three pillars of leadership: authority, knowledge, and exemplarity.

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<sup>4</sup> Garrone G.M. *Prefazione*, in *Lettere di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello Confondatrice dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice Prefazione*. di S. E. il Card. Gabriel-Marie Garrone. Introduzione e note di Maria Esther Posada, Milano Ancora 1975 7-8

<sup>5</sup> Suor Leslie Sandigo è Consigliera Generale per la Famiglia Salesiana dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice



1. **Authority:** A person with appropriate behaviors, competence, and the ability to communicate effectively, fairness in demanding from others as from oneself, balance as the ability to admit mistakes without complexes, and manage conflicts as they arise without reverential fear and self-censorship.
2. **Knowledge:** Knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of the people collaborating with you, knowledge of the internal and external reality, knowledge of tools and actions to achieve results.
3. **Exemplarity:** Congruence, coherence, and alignment between what a leader says and does because it must provide guidance.<sup>6</sup>

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND THEIR ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

I will now examine our association's "practical life," attempting to outline in each management area what style those in leadership positions should adopt. I will analyze management in terms of the following:

- A. Organization.
- B. Administration.
- C. Communication-Information.
- D. Knowledge of the civil and fiscal legislation of one's own country.
- E. Projects.

### A) Organization

We are a non-profit organization, meaning we do not operate for profit, and any surplus funds are reinvested for institutional purposes. We serve to promote and expand social rights, acting as a global player in a solidarity economy based on values alternative to profit and competitiveness.

Our origin naturally places us in the third sector and entrusts us with a responsibility linked to our response to the needs of young people, especially the poorest. Inspired by the charisma of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, we share the goals and identity expressed in the "Identity Document" and the "Identity Card of the Salesian Family." Mother Yvonne Reungoat, referring to the Identity Documents, described it as follows: "A true identity card, a mirror to reflect to verify the authenticity of the response to the specificities of your presence within the FMA Institute and the Salesian Family. An essential document to be presented to those who desire to become part of the Past Pupils of the FMA, so they can confront it and decide, consciously, whether to join or not."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup>This thought by Mother Yvonne introduces us to the culture of the organization, where the vision, as an image of a near future that reflects the organization's values, and the mission, as

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<sup>6</sup> Nicoletta Todesco – *Leadership e carisma* Ed. Bruno Editore

<sup>7</sup> Madre Yvonne Reungoat Superiora emerita dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, nominata membro del Dicastero per i Vescovi



the operational guide to the organization's actions, must be brought into unity and presented as our image to the outside world.

At the organizational level, the association must be democratic and participatory, allowing the actual participation of those involved with transparency. This means ensuring that information reaches everyone and reaches them promptly. Each association level is called upon to activate control systems to ensure that critical information reaches everyone correctly. There are various methods related to the number of people to be achieved. For example, (a) meetings among specific groups where each person informs others about their actions. (b) Periodically sending out a newsletter that collects more information (email); (c) identifying a certain number of communication facilitators responsible for regularly speaking with those who are distant from the "center" to keep them informed about what is happening.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, all members must have the tools to decode the information received, for example, acquiring basic budgeting skills to interpret it, which can be obtained through training or other learning methods.

An organization presupposes the presence of a hierarchy that should be perceived internally, not as a position of value but as functional to the organized life of the association. The organizational moments in which it is expressed can be the Councils at various association levels, within which it is necessary to:

- a) make shared decisions,
- b) cultivate relationships of trust,
- c) listen to everyone as much as possible, aware that situations may also require an individual choice.
- d) Work together in a climate of genuine friendship. This strengthens motivation, helps with effort, and more easily allows for achieving set goals.

The *leader* must share the vision and create a collaborative spirit by valuing the abilities and skills of each person. Everyone feels like an essential element of the same team, whose strength lies in cohesion. Everyone must cooperate to encourage each other to give their best without expecting perfection or, worse yet, perfectionism. "Do good for the sake of good," Don Bosco admonished.

We must pay particular attention to time, one of the fundamental factors for consciously and effectively participating in the life of the organization to which we belong. The scarcity of time forces us to focus on what is essential to avoid wasting it on marginal and uninteresting matters or even harmful ones. We must take inspiration from Mother Mazzarello, who managed, with extreme care and attention, through letters with brief but essential content to reach all her daughters and even laywomen, thus maintaining unity.

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<sup>8</sup> Cfr. AA.VV. – *Lavorare nel terzo settore* Ed. Carocci Faber



## **B) Administration:**

Specific skills must be acquired, or networks must be established with organized groups. If higher-level organizations rely on professionals, they must enable Federations and Unions, through Federations, to have a reference point. This can also be done among Federations.

Principles of administration that align with our style are transparency and sharing in case of difficulties. The growth of members through administrative training contributes to creating an atmosphere of trust and exchange.

## **C) Communication and Information:**

We must not only exchange information but also understand that in communication, we build relationships, which is the most critical aspect of our humanity. Our relational capacity characterizes us. Communication is a way through which we relate, so for us, communicating is a way of humanizing.

Although seemingly contradictory, an element that is of paramount importance in this regard, and one that I draw from the Rule of St. Benedict, is silence. "Our society is a society of communication, mass media, not silence. It matters little if the majority of information, due to its redundancy and incoherence, is not perceived or, worse, not understood. The important thing is to create and distribute information: news, data, images, sounds. In reality, what matters is not the quantity of information but its understanding and use. The dimension of silence is the time required to give depth to ourselves and our relationships. Within this depth, news, ideas, and images become true information. That is, a concept capable of giving lasting form to our words and actions."<sup>9</sup>

## **D) Knowledge of Civil and Fiscal Legislation:**

Those taking on leadership roles must know this aspect of the association they are responsible for. Let us not forget that the association's legal representative has joint liability unless the association is recognized as a legal entity. In this case, it is also necessary to increase moments of updating or direct individuals to specific training agencies or networks within the Salesian Family to participate in training courses organized by other groups. Knowledge must be expanded to all those actively involved in management to increase awareness.

**E) Projects:** Specific skills are required for "planning" both for the idea and drafting phase of the project to be presented to public institutions or private entities and for the implementation and reporting phase. In this aspect, internal training is needed for widespread and shared knowledge or networking with other groups belonging to the Salesian Family that are structured in this regard.

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<sup>9</sup> Massimo Folador *L'organizzazione perfetta – La regola di San Benedetto, una saggezza antica al servizio dell'impresa moderna* ed. Guerini e associati.



#### 4. OPEN CONCLUSIONS

From the broad perspective of the extraordinary human richness of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, I draw some concluding notes.

a) "*A leader* must always have a vision, that is, the ability to look ahead and beyond with heart and intelligence. They must be able to build the team by strengthening its weakest player, have authority, know how to cooperate, be a *primus inter pares*, learn how to motivate and recognize value, establish a relationship of trust with others, recognize the importance of gratitude and also of what others have had towards them. If one does not see it, one cannot transfer it. A leader must be **dispensable**, not **indispensable**.

b) A *leader* knows they cannot achieve the maximum if the relationship relies solely on the mind and rationality. To be able to achieve anything, everything is required: the mind, the brain, and the heart. More than their words, empathy establishes a relationship of trust with others. They work to ensure a line of continuity within the group, an inclusive and collaborative relationship. They should not occupy space but allow others to collaborate with them.

A leader seeks the popularity of the vision, not their popularity in others!"<sup>10</sup>

I conclude with the words on hope by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini: "We must not shift our hope from the Word of God to the works we intend to carry out at any cost. If we do not place sufficient trust in the hope that only God gives us, we seek to base it on something that represents us, that externalizes us, to find our security there."<sup>11</sup>

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